

REMARKS

Claims 16-31 are presently pending in this application. Claim 15 has been cancelled without prejudice, and claim 16 has been rewritten in independent form to include all of the features of cancelled claim 15. Although claim 15 has been cancelled, the applicants do not concede the merits of the rejections under Section 102 and 103. The applicants accordingly expressly reserve the right to pursue the cancelled subject matter in a continuation application.

The Office Action dated June 23, 2004, raises several issues with respect to claims 15 and 17-31. More specifically, these claims were rejected on the following grounds:

(A) claims 15, 17-19, 30 and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,622,048 issued to Mann ("Mann"); and

(B) claims 20-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Mann, and claims 28 and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over the combination of Mann and U.S. Patent No. 6,463,328 issued to John et al. ("John").

A. Response to Section 102 Rejection

The rejection of claims 15, 17-19, 30 and 31 should be withdrawn. More specifically, the rejection of independent claim 15 is moot because this claim has been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 17-19, 30 and 31 are allowable because these claims have been amended to depend from allowable independent claim 16. Therefore, the rejection of claims 17-19, 30 and 31 should be withdrawn.

B. Response to Section 103 Rejections

The rejection of claims 20-27 under Section 103 over Mann, and the rejection of claims 28 and 29 over the combination of Mann and John should also be withdrawn. More specifically, all of these claims have been amended to depend from allowable independent claim 16.

C. Conclusion

The applicants thank the Examiner for holding that claim 16 presents allowable subject matter. This claim has been rewritten in independent form to include the subject matter of original independent claim 15 without changing the scope of claim 16. In view of the foregoing, the pending claims comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the applied art. The applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application and a mailing of a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-3258.

Respectfully submitted,
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